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## **Struggling to Balance Career and Family: The Case of Married Female English Teachers in Morocco**

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### **Abstract**

This paper aims to uncover the gender-specific challenges of Moroccan female teachers as they struggle to strike a balance between their family and their professional duties, bearing in mind that both work and family are greedy for time and energy and require loyalty and dedication. This life work interface is very challenging especially in academia, a highly competitive environment that requires extreme flexibility and absolute dedication. My objective is to showcase the obstacles that hold female teachers back from thriving professionally and shed light on their struggles in balancing between family and work. As such, this paper has three objectives: (i) to unearth the factors that challenge female teachers and indispose them to family/work imbalance, (ii) to explore ways to mitigate these challenges and achieve a synergy between work and family, and (iii) to sensitize the policy makers and the ELT community about these challenges in order to circumvent the “leaky pipeline”. With these objectives in mind, this study is based on qualitative data from 14 married female English teachers from different academic levels and from different regions. More specifically, the study seeks to delve into the personal experiences of these participants and get an insider’s view of female teachers’ work and family related struggles and draw useful implications for policy makers, administrators and the ELT community. I argue that to achieve work/life balance, there is need for policies that foster a supportive work environment, “temporal flexibility” and “operational flexibility” (Bailyn 1997; Clark 2001)

*Keywords:* ELT, gender, female perspective, work/life balance, Morocco



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## **0. Introduction**

Gender sensitization and women empowerment are at the fore front of most contemporary societies. It follows that the struggles of working women in general and female teachers in particular should be a problem of the past. However, women teachers, both nationally and internationally, are still struggling to juggle the family responsibilities and their professional duties. Many factors account for this state of affairs, but the most dominant is the view that “society still views women as the primary carriers of children and other family members and, as a result, many women are now faced with juggling the role of mother, partner and daughter as well as employee” (Austen and Birch 2000, 2). This dual role has severe repercussions on female teachers, especially those married with children and/or those who care for their elderly parents. Therefore, the primary aim of this study is to investigate how the variable of gender is played out in academia; more specifically, how teaching brings to the fore the hurdles that women teachers face in Morocco and attempt to produce suggestions for actors to bring about social change.

This paper aims to uncover the gender-specific challenges of Moroccan female teachers as they strive to balance their family and work commitments. The objectives of this study are three-fold: (i) to unearth the factors that challenge female teachers and indispose them to family/work imbalance, (ii) to explore ways to address these challenges and achieve a synergy between work and family (iii) to sensitize the policy makers and the ELT community about these challenges. By exploring these teachers’ professional and family related struggles, the goal is to shed light on the problems that impact their performance at the workplace, and explore the obstacles that hold them back from thriving professionally. I will also subsequently put forward some practical suggestions that female teachers could use to develop coping strategies, build their capacity to engender growth and excellence within the school system, and increase gender equity in both schools and society.

By and large, the literature on female teachers ranges from the exploitation of female teachers and how to overcome it to the struggle for female agency inside and outside the class (see McCormick 2007). While these concerns hold true for many Moroccan female teachers, this paper addresses the issue from a different vantage, namely, female teachers’ struggle to strike a balance between professional and family life to build capacity and thrive in the workplace. Research on this topic,



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especially at the national level, is scarce and the existing ones (see Section 1 for more details) focus mainly on women in higher education and female teacher representation (Llorent-Bedmar et al. 2017). This study, however, puts emphasis on the perspectives of female teachers from both secondary and tertiary education.

This paper consists of four major sections, the first of which introduces the study, and the second surveys the body of research related to dual career women in academia and provides a synthesis of the most pertinent findings. The third section outlines the methodology adopted in the study, while the fourth presents the findings and discusses them. The fifth section highlights the implications and offers some recommendations on how to help female teachers build their capacity, balance between their family and work duties, overcome professional discrimination and increase their sense of professional fulfillment. The last section makes some concluding remarks.

## **1. Review of the Literature**

The literature on dual career parents, especially women, and the challenges they face reveal that great efforts have been deployed to change the culture of the workplace and make it more family-friendly (Clark 2001; Flynn 1997) to allow female professionals to break through the glass ceiling. However, despite these efforts, a large body of research shows that, due to traditional roles within society, dual career women are subject to burnout and are still struggling to strike a balance between the work, family as well as other social responsibilities. This review synthesizes the existing literature on the challenges of dual career women with a focus on academe, mainly, female teachers in view of developing a clear picture of the barriers they face. Drawing on the Western as well as the Arab contexts, the review also sheds light on the measures that have been taken to make the work environment supportive and more family friendly.

Women's participation in the workforce and paid labor is motivated by economic and social factors. In this regard, Austen and Birch (2000) report that the need to supplement family income and the employment and wage-earning opportunities available to women drive women's participation in the work force. Other factors, such as an increase in educational attainment among women (Able and Volmer 2011), the falling value of men's wages, changes in women's wages



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and job opportunities along with the desire to improve the living conditions of their families pushed many women, especially mothers, to join the workforce (Jenkins 1992; Gregory and Hunter 1995; Duncan and Edwards 1997, among others). As a result, men's and women's roles in society have changed and "traditional family models have been steadily replaced by more egalitarian partnership constellations. Women's roles are no longer confined to family and home-keeper roles, and men are no longer the sole breadwinners in the family" (Abele and Volmer 2011, 173)

While this increase in the female workforce may have improved women's financial situation and increased their independence and their representation in many sectors in the public sphere, it had severe bearings on their social lives. This holds true for all women but is more noticeable among married females with children. Due to constraints of space, focus in the present review will be laid on the literature related to women in academia and more specifically married teachers with children.

It is important to note that childcare, family obligations, traditional roles distribution, gender-exclusive gate-keeping are among the barriers that hold back women's research career, reduce their scientific contribution and prevent them from taking international trips and occupying leadership positions (August and Waltman 2004; Alonso, Bolaños, González, Villamón and Benavent 2010; Caprile et al. 2012; Teixeira, Betsaida, Freitas and De Almeida 2015; Cervia and Biancheri 2017, among others). As a case in point, research on gender roles among scientific researchers conducted by Rosser (1999, 2004), Rosser and Lane (2002) and August and Waltman (2004), highlights the underrepresentation of women in research, especially within the science arena. Such findings are also consonant with Caprile et al. (2012, 55) who contend that "women are particularly underrepresented among academic gate-keepers and in leading positions in science and science policy organizations". According to the author, this underrepresentation is due to the fact the gate-keepers of research funding in Europe are to a large extent constituted by middle-aged male academics (ETAN Report 2000). Other factors include family responsibilities, childcare and a "leaky pipeline" (Berryman 1983). In the same vein, Blickenstaff (2015) maintains that the very nature of science may contribute to the removal of women from the 'pipeline' (p.369) due to



the biased “selection processes and career access in the world of science that are anything but gender-neutral, and which systematically penalize women” (Cervia and Biancheri 2017, 216)

Revisiting “the pipeline theory”, Cervia and Biancheri (2017, 217) focus on the work-life interface through “the friction between gender-based social obligations” and the requirements of the scientific profession, which according to the authors is one of the “fields with the worst performance in terms of female participation and academic career levels”. Their main finding is that maternity is the biggest obstacle to female careers, as child caring tends to be time consuming. The authors also highlight the subordinate status of the wife/partner of a male university professor who would assume the roles of housewife and supporter, and further point out that “the leaky pipeline” finds support in the socially constructed roles and gender-based expectations of our society and on the common understanding of “doing science”.

In addition to falling out of the pipeline and facing discrimination in some academic arenas, female teachers are also prone to burnout more than their male colleagues. Slegers (1999), for instance, argues that the interaction of personal variables such as gender, age, marital status, among others, and organizational variables, such as working conditions and school structure may lead to teacher burnout. This view is further supported by Friedman (2003), who maintains that teachers who do not receive professional support are prone to exhaustion and a sense of lack of accomplishment. In their comprehensive review of twelve studies conducted with university staff in different countries, Watts and Robertson (2011) conclude that student-related variables and faculty members’ age and gender play a major role in predicting teacher burnout. This burnout is reported to affect female teachers’ academic performance more than their male colleagues, as Adekola (2010, 888) demonstrates in a study on work burnout among university staff; the findings of such a study lend support to the view that “female staff experienced higher level of reduced personal accomplishment than their male counterparts”. These findings are further corroborated by another quantitative study to determine the effect of burnout on Malaysian English Teachers; its results are evidence of the high levels of burnout among female teachers, and is significantly higher among the married ones (Mousavy and Nimehchisalem 2014).



Several studies have explored the situation of female teachers in the Arab world (Ayyash-Abdo 2000; Almansour and Kempner 2016; Alsubaie and Jones 2017, Eleraqui and Salahuddin 2018, among others), and I will briefly review two studies that span two different regions. Ayyash-Abdo (2000) discusses the status of female teachers in nine MENA countries. Her findings indicate that the lack of pre-service and in-service training as well as sociocultural constraints have limited the professional competency and growth of these women and contributed to gender disparity. Almansoura and Kempner's (2016) study, on the other hand, examined the critical involvement of Saudi female faculty in the professional and public sphere in the post Arab Spring era. More specifically, the researchers investigated how women professors engaged in political, cultural and social issues within the public sphere in Saudi Arabia and globally in Princess Nurah Bint Abdulrahman University (PNU), a college run and managed by women. The findings pinpoint family obligations and poor bureaucratic research infrastructure, and cultural issues related to transportation and international travel as the major stumbling blocks that face these Saudi teachers and reduce their participation in public sphere. The authors interestingly report:

the major impediment for their ability to participate in the public sphere is family responsibilities. Every professor noted her obligations to the family come first in the Saudi culture. Most also noted that these family responsibilities are not 'shared equally' with husbands or male family members<sup>1</sup>.

Scholarly literature on female teachers and work life balance struggles in Morocco seems to be scarce and the few available studies are either concerned with gender as a variable in exploring issues such as stress, burnout and job satisfaction. Benmansour (1998), for instance, explores job satisfaction, stress and coping strategies among 215 Moroccan high school teachers. The results show that female teachers scored higher than their male colleagues in respect of occupational stress. These findings were further supported by a recent study that assesses teacher burnout during COVID-19. In this regard, Amri et al. (2020) conducted a study to check for burnout and its effect on the mental health of 125 primary school teachers. The results indicate that primary school

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<sup>1</sup> Almansoura and Kempner, 2016, 883.



teachers, mainly females (57%) suffer a burnout that is caused by the pressure of workload and work/family conflict.

In another study on gender inequality among university teachers, Llorent-Bedmar et al. (2017) explore the opinions of male and female faculty members on three aspects of their careers, namely, teaching, research, administration and the sociocultural aspect. Teaching-wise, it was found that a high percentage of women believe in the existence of inequity based on gender within their university and claim to have been in an unequal position on more occasions than their male colleagues. The reasons behind these disparities according to the participants range from the sexist education that is instilled at an early age to the roles that the male and female participants play within the family. The difficulty to balance between family duties and work also reflects negatively on research activities and scientific contributions for female teachers, who reported to be unable to take part in international conferences and coordinate research events due to juggling family responsibilities. These responsibilities also prevent female teachers from holding higher office, such as dean or vice dean. Another interesting finding of this study is that female faculty are excluded from scientific events mainly because these events are mostly discussed and decided on in cafés, where female teachers cannot go due to the constraints of home and family responsibilities.

The common denominator among all these studies on female teachers both in the Western and the national literature is that a combination of family responsibilities, dual career pressure, lack of support from some male partners and family members, along with sociocultural issues, constitute the major impediments to women teachers' professional growth and effective contribution to sustainable development. They are also a source of burnout and work and family life imbalance. In fact, this combination of factors creates what de Wet, Ashley and Kegel (2002) refer to as an effective filter that subjects women to the glass ceiling effect, reduces their representativity and removes them from “the pipeline” (Blickenstaff, 2005) of some disciplines such as science, engineering and key managerial positions. Furthermore, these obstacles burden female teachers, affect their capacity building and bring into question what Abele and Volmer (2001, 176) referred



to as “value shifts towards more equality in gender roles”, especially within the Arab world where the “normative dilemma<sup>2</sup>” is more pronounced.

## 2. Method

This study addresses the following three research questions: what limits the achievement of equality for women in the teaching profession? How does gender influence a teacher’s struggles and success? How can we build female teachers’ capacity and bridge the gap in gender equality?

To address these questions and obtain an insider’s view about this problem, a qualitative design has been used. Qualitative research is “primarily an inductive process of organizing data into categories and identifying patterns (relationships) among categories” (McMillan and Schumacher 1993, 479). The desire to identify the patterns and relationships and unearth the opinions and attitudes of the participants through their narratives, and accordingly, gain a deeper understanding of the issues at stake, has been the decisive factor behind the choice of the qualitative design.

The data on which this study is based consist in the testimonials of 14 female teachers of English. Indeed, the narratives of these respondents constitute the backbone of the data used in this study. The respondents’ stories were compared and sorted into primary and secondary themes that relate to professional and family life.

I approached female teachers of English from different academic levels, requesting them to share their stories. Thus, I emailed a written interview guide with open questions to the ELT community, but only 14 female teachers responded. The respondents’ age ranges between 29 and 50 with a range of 9 to 35 years of teaching experience. Thirteen females are all public-school teachers, except for one participant who works in the private sector; seven of them have a BA in English studies, two are reading for their doctoral degree, and 6 are doctorate holders. They are all married

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<sup>2</sup> The authors define normative dilemma as “discrepancies between personal and social norms. Working mothers were particularly confronted with the social norm expecting mothers to stay at home and take care of their children and considering working-full time as being egoistic and at the expense of children’s well-being” (Abele and Volmer 2011, 176)





and, except for 2, they all have children. Finally, the informants are from three regions, namely Marrakech, Casablanca and El Jadida.

In terms of data collection tools, I have used a questionnaire which includes mainly open-ended questions that prompted the participants to narrate their experiences as household wives and career women and the challenges they personally face when teaching English. It is crucial to point out that, in addition to designing lessons, providing classroom instruction and undertaking assessment, they also have social and family responsibilities. The questions also focused on the number of years they have worked as teachers, their marital status and the number of their children. The same questions were also posted on Women's group on Facebook and generated a great deal of responses that will be considered in this study. Given that the researcher is also a member of the teaching community and is "involved in in the day-to-day or routine activities of participants in the researcher setting" (Schensul et al. 1999, 91) participant observation was also used to collect data in order to "develop a holistic understanding of the phenomena under study that is as objective and accurate as possible given the limitations of the method" (DeWalt and DeWalt 2002, 92).

### **3. Findings and Discussion**

Data from the participants' narratives echo to a great extent the findings of the international and national literature. That is, all these women face professional and social discrimination; therefore, they constantly struggle to balance between their family life and professional duties. These struggles have been arranged into themes that were sorted out in decreasing order of importance.

#### ***3.1 Professional discrimination***

One of the issues that tops the participants' narratives relates to the "inconveniencing timetables", that is, teaching slots that are very inconveniencing for female teachers. Indeed, 10 out of 13 participants complain that they have been discriminated against when scheduling teaching hours. Thus, some teachers complained that they teach late in the afternoon "till 6:30 p.m." (Participant 9) or late morning hours when "it is time to pick up kids from school or be at home for them" (Participant 13). The findings indicate that the timetables are assigned during school meetings, which most female teachers are unable to attend because of their inconvenient timing. One



participant even states that “male teachers manipulate these meetings and always choose the best time slots and the courses they like, leaving us with the rest” (Participant 1). Similarly, another participant further reports that “while designing timetables, the people in charge don’t take into consideration gender. A female teacher is treated like a male one, while the latter doesn’t have any house chores and doesn’t usually look after the children” (Participant 10).

The second most reported problem relates to exclusion from decision making. Some teachers complained that due to family responsibilities, women tend to be marginalized during some academic meetings: “during school councils and meetings, we see that male teachers are manipulating them and most of the time they are held during times when a female teacher can’t attend”, reported one participant. In fact, some meetings are even held outside the school premises; that is, in cafés where women cannot go either because of the unsuitable timing due to family commitments or the social stigma associated with such public places: “department meetings are sometimes held in cafes, which is very inconveniencing for a female teacher”, noted one participant.

The third issue consists in the absence of female teachers from power structures. In fact, some teachers complained that because of the patriarchal system, most decisions are taken by men. For instance, during recruitment and thesis defense, a female teacher reported that “the jury members are mostly male teachers; women stand very little chance; it is an old boy’s network!” The fourth issue concerns underestimation. Indeed, most participants report that male teachers belittle their female colleagues, who must fight to assert themselves. As one participant stated, “In a man’s dominated department, women need to fight for their ideas. Men professors belittle women”. In line with this, another faculty resents the expressions used by a male colleague during a meeting to distribute academic tasks among teachers pointing to some female colleagues saying “you are in charge of making msemen and harsha (wheat and semoulina pancakes)”, implying that female colleagues are only good at house chores, which further emphasizes the normative dilemma.

The fifth problem relates to classroom management. Some teachers expressed their concern with the behavior of high school students and how they are becoming harder and more challenging to manage. In this respect, two female teachers reported that because of their young age they were



harassed by male students who tried to “break the boundaries” as one of them reported “and get my phone number”. Another female pointed out that it is challenging for her to discuss such behaviors in private with some male students for fear of jeopardizing her reputation.

A final issue is that of teaching materials. Some teachers reported that the learners’ language proficiency level is so low that they find textbook materials challenging, so these teachers find themselves forced to invest more time and effort in looking for resources and preparing lessons to match students’ levels. Another related concern is the over-ambitious program, especially for Second Year Baccalaureate students. Teachers are forced to rush through the units and even work overtime to finish the program, as one participant puts it: “This very often leads teachers to work overtime (for free) to be able to cover the long ambitious programme”. It should be noted that the time invested in developing course materials, adapting it to students’ levels and scheduling extra classes to complete the programme comes “at the expense of their family and social responsibilities” as pointed out by one participant. Consequently, they are on a very tight schedule, with little time to their families and not to mention themselves.

### ***3.2 Social inequality***

Like all dual career women, juggling professional life and family duties comes at a cost for female teachers who must handle multiple roles (teacher, mother, wife, daughter, cook, cleaner, etc.) and face stressors from work and family life demands. The life of the female in the postmodern world has indeed become fragmented.

One of the major social duties of the female teacher is childcare, which is one of the most serious concerns that is common to participants with children; it affects female teachers socially as well as professionally. Socially, female teachers report that their professional life is so consuming and drains them of all energy leaving them little for their family. Some of the very recurrent expressions used when referring to this topic are “no energy”, “exhausted”, “stressed”, “not enough attention for kids”. Teaching is a demanding job and requires a considerable amount of time and energy, and managing a house is no less tough, which overworks female teachers who complain that:



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it is really difficult to match both duties considering that they are both demanding. You have to put up with the conditions of working hard at school, all the stuff to satisfy students' needs and above all, when you come home you have to manage all the household chores.

This tough situation that female teachers face is partly due to the lack of assistance from their husbands, whom some participants describe as “another kid” who expects to be cared for along with the children, as the following testimonial clearly shows: “in a community as patriarchal as ours, where mostly the wife is the person in charge of all the housework and the kids' needs, the husband is another kid to look after”. This gender social inequality, which is manifest in the continued association of “traditional duties of domesticity” (Frenando & Jayatilaka, 2006) with women teachers, is deeply rooted within the traditional patriarchal society where “men are assumed to have primary responsibility at work and women primary responsibility at home” (Clark 2001, 348). This pressure has been further exacerbated by the pandemic outbreak and the shutting down of schools. Consequently, in addition to their online teaching, childcare responsibilities, house chores and other social responsibilities, female teachers also had the extra task of tutoring their own children. Evidence for this is drawn from studies in the four corners of the world (Hupkau and Peterongolo 2020; Del Borca et al. 2020; La Redaction 2020). Interestingly, Del Borca et al. (2020) investigated women's tasks, household, childcare before and after COVID-19. The findings show that women are more likely than men to be the sole providers of the sharp increase in childcare during the lockdown. As the researchers point out,

44% of working women have kept their jobs by working from home (versus 30% of men). Women are therefore much more likely to work from home, which increases the likelihood of a heavier overall workload for women resulting from the combination of their occupation and domestic work<sup>3</sup>.

The same issue was reported by La Redaction (2020) in Morocco, where women's responsibilities have tripled compared with their husbands, as they have to take care of the elderly, sick or handicapped family members. The article states “les femmes peuvent avoir des responsabilités

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<sup>3</sup> Del Borca et al. 2020, 5.



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supplémentaires, l'enseignement à distance et la garde des enfants, s'ajoute à cela les tâches ménagères, préparer à manger, et enfin, assurer son travail, si elle a une activité professionnelle (see La Redaction, 2020) for more details). The study warns that this load can affect women's mental health and slow down their professional career: "la santé mentale des femmes, une limite pour leur épanouissement et un frein pour l'évolution de leurs carrières professionnelles".

Just like school takes mothers' time and energy away from their children, children can also get in the way of professional life, which is the case of some participants who complained that they missed classes, meetings and other important academic events, such as conferences and even social gatherings. This care responsibility affects career prospects negatively as one participant testifies: "because of maternity leaves and 2 kids, I waited 10 years to become 'Associate Professor', while my male colleagues did it in 4 years". This biological constraint, which is the first and foremost priority, as Ward and Wolf-Wendel (2012) observe "the cries of the baby are even louder than the tick of the tenure clock, and more urgent as well", puts an unequal level of pressure and stress on women relative to their male professional counterparts (de Wet, Ashley and Kegel 2000). In addition to slowing down female teachers' careers, childcare can also lead some teachers to pause their careers because they cannot juggle both, as this informant reports: "I just submitted my paperwork today to take next year off because it's soooooo stressful! I just can't".

The second most frequently reported social duty lies in parental care. The duty of caring for one's ageing parents is almost a daughter's job and rarely a son's, which triples women burden and at times speeds up the leak out of the pipeline. This holds true for some informants who had to care for their parents alongside with their kids, husbands and eventually their work.

The third duty consists in the domestic chores. Indeed, despite the progress that women have made and the rights that they enjoy, Morocco is still a patriarchal society with a clear division of domestic labor. Thus, "housework, cooking and shopping have to be done hand in hand with preparing lesson plans, designing and correcting tests", as one participant reports. In the same vein, most of the participants complained that they do not receive assistance from their husbands because, as another teacher stated, "the husband does not see them as his responsibility at all".



To sum up, the findings show that professional, family and social chores and duties are part and parcel of the female teacher's daily lives and leave them with hardly any time to rest, as one participant correctly sums it up: "weekends and vacation: assessment and designing activities; no holidays". These factors represent a significant burden and a psychological strain for female teachers and predispose their lives to imbalance, affecting their physical as well as their mental health thereof. However, the fact that these teachers are called upon to do all these tasks is a crying proof of their potential and capacity, and the question that imposes itself is how to preserve this potential and harness it to seal the pipeline, stop the leak, empower these teachers and bridge the gender gap both at home and work? This is the focus of the next section after defining capacity building.

#### **4. Capacity building**

Osaji (2014, 3) defines capacity as "the ability to understand or do something" and "building" is "an increase in the amount of something over a period of time". It is "the process by which individuals, groups, organizations, institutions and societies increase their abilities to (i) perform core functions, solve problems, define and achieve objectives, (ii) understand and deal with their development needs in a broad content and in a sustainable manner (UNDP, 1998). Osaji (2014, 8) argues that teacher capacity building benefits students and teachers equally. Thus, students will be well prepared to "meet world class standards" in their studies and "successfully assume adult responsibilities for citizenship and work", while teachers will be empowered "to make complex decisions, identify and solve problems, to connect theory, practice and student outcomes".

It should be noted that Osaji's definition of capacity building is mainly focused on building the professional capacity to better meet school's expectations, and does not really address the work balance issue, which is at the heart of the present study. It follows, then, that there is need "to go beyond instituting programs" as Galinsky and Stein (1990) argue and "change the culture of the organization to become more "family-friendly" (Clark 2001, 348). In line with this, Bailyn (1997) and Clark (2001, 349) maintain that institutions should meet three characteristics to build a family-friendly work environment namely, temporal flexibility (flexible work scheduling), operational flexibility (flexible work processes), and an understanding by organization leadership that family



needs are important. Along the same lines, Regan (1994) maintains that such cultural changes can help employees “make choices that accommodate their families, without detriment to their career and advancement in the organization”. Based on the findings of the present study and the female teachers’ personal narratives, I argue that the cultural aspects as identified by Regan (1994), Bailyn (1997) and endorsed by Clark (2001) will help to nurture and further strengthen Moroccan ELT professional and social capacity as well as empower them. More specifically, I argue that there is need for establishing an effective framework that establishes a democratic, plural, equitable and gender sensitive space, a space where women teachers no longer feel as “the outsider within” (Collins, 1986). This framework should guarantee a supportive work environment, collegial support and positive masculinity.

Academia is a very competitive environment that requires extreme flexibility and absolute dedication. It consumes most of female teachers’ time, who still have children, husbands, parents and house chores to attend to. This, and as mentioned earlier, “subjects them to dual exploitation both at home and work unlike men” (Fernando, Jayatilaka and Wickramasinghe 2006, 11) and accordingly makes balance impossible to achieve as rightly expressed by these Facebook participants “Balance?! I don't know what that is” and “Can you say burn out??! There is no balance. Work wins every time for me. I get fussed at by the daycare for being late picking up”. As a result, I argue along with other researchers that capacity building for female teachers in Morocco is contingent on the instantiation of a family-friendly work environment culture. Research shows that a supportive work environment brings about work-family balance, which reduces role conflict at home, increases satisfaction at work and facilitates the synergy between work and home (Bailyn 1997; Clark 200; Barik 2017, among others). It follows then that to make the work culture supportive and women friendly, priority should be given to female teachers while scheduling timetables. Also, meetings should be held in family-friendly time and space and prioritize female teachers with family responsibility (children or elderly). This will help reduce stress and as Barik (2017, 9.) points out, if an institution understands this and provides some flexibility, this will improve teachers’ work performance since “a happy worker is a hard worker”. Further, in the event that some female teachers cannot attend a meeting due to a family work



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schedule conflict, technology should be used to schedule online meetings to accommodate these working mothers and include them in the decision making, rather than decide for them as it is oftentimes the case. Further, to achieve professional equity, the biological nature of women should be taken into consideration and some positive discrimination measures or quota regarding work promotions, professional development and research should be introduced. This would be a stepping stone towards work family balance in line with Maxwell and McDougall (2004)'s claim that flexibility at work assists employees in achieving work life balance and excelling at work.

Another essential ingredient for building a supportive work environment is collegiality, which consists in “teachers’ involvement with their peers on any level, be it intellectual, moral, political, social and/or emotional” (Jarzabkowski 2002, 6). Research on collegiality in academia is conclusive on its vitality in building a supportive work environment as it fosters job satisfaction, increases professional commitment and organizational belongingness, as well as teacher professional development and growth (Donaldson 2001; Jarzabkowski 2000, 2002, Shah, 2012, among others). Donaldson (2001, 62) interestingly champions that “at the root of many relationships is the need to share and enjoy time with others, the need to connect and befriend, and the need to seek professional assistance and camaraderie”. Such “conscious care” (Donaldson 2001) fosters positive social interaction, camaraderie, boosts emotional health among colleagues and reduces depersonalization and emotional stress. Collegial culture is contingent on penalizing sexist language in the work environment to foster interpersonal relationships based on respect. Such measures will undoubtedly increase the sense of self-efficacy among all teachers and increases understanding of the female teacher situation, which will certainly result in a more balanced home/work environment for all.

While collegiality contributes to building a supportive work environment for female teachers, positive masculinity is the key to achieving family balance at home. More specifically, I argue that there is need for positive masculinity whereby the traditional gender role distribution should be reconsidered and husbands should share the load with their wives for an equitable household. Fernando et al. (2006) maintain that a change in the minds of the patriarchal society can only be achieved by sensitizing the society on the gender aspects, at all levels. According to a recent study





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by Hamdouch, Nadifi and Gillotal (2018), 70% of the men in Morocco still have a largely patriarchal perception of household roles' distribution. They report that “72% des hommes estiment que changer les couches des enfants, faire leur toilette et les nourrir devraient être de la responsabilité de la mère”, while 37% believe that it is “ honteux que les hommes s’occupent des enfants ou effectuent d'autres tâches domestiques” and 64% of the male respondents report that “Les garçons sont responsables du comportement de leurs sœurs, même s’ils sont plus jeunes qu’elles”. To eradicate this mentality, a comprehensive set of policy measures are required to be implemented by the governments, statutory bodies and the educational institutions, to design educational and professional development programmes that take into consideration the position of women in society and their role in the country’s development. These policies should also take into account the biological realities to seal the pipeline and foster female teachers’ representativity in higher offices and decision-making positions.

## **5. Conclusion**

This study has shed light on the struggles of women teachers in Morocco through the narratives of some married female English teachers. It has highlighted the challenging realities at home and the hurdles they face at work and underscored the ways in which these factors impact their performance at the workplace in the teaching profession. The findings indicate that the female teachers are burdened by their dual career and lack of support in the workplace as well as at home. The study also strived to raise awareness of the importance of gender and call for social justice, for if teachers are the backbone of society because they shape its future, female teachers are the builders of such a society as they give birth to its girls and boys, nurture them at home and at school and as such deserve acknowledgment. Morocco ratified the CEDAW convention, which condemns violence against women. However, to establish a family-friendly work environment, achieve social equality and promote women agency, policy makers should reconsider the labor code and make it more women friendly to better accommodate their realities, empower them and help them thrive.



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